Social Problems
SYG 2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course examines “social problems” in a critical and global perspective. The social problems examined concern issues such as poverty, wealth, race-ethnicity, sexuality-gender, age, disability and ableism, schooling, work, health, environment, space/place, politics, crime, justice, violence, genocide, and war. The course both fulfills the UCC requirement for Foundations of Social Inquiry and serves as a Global Learning Foundations course. Its specific objectives are as follows:

- Global awareness: Students will demonstrate understanding of how interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces construct “social problems.” That is, students will demonstrate recognition of how interplays of such forces define some aspects of life but not others as social problems.

- Global perspective: Students will analyze multiple perspectives on social problems, ranging from varieties of “individual-blame” explanations to varieties of “system-blame” explanations, from the standpoint of interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces.

- Global engagement: Students will conceptualize possible ways to ameliorate or solve social problems from the standpoint of interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces.

Final grades will be based on attendance/punctuality, multiple-choice exams, in-class quizzes, discussion forum posts, and a team project (PowerPoint project and its oral presentation to the class).

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVE-LEARNING COMPONENT

Students will form teams, each of which will select a specific social problem; conceptualize the problem in terms of interplays of local, national, transnational, global, and intercultural forces; and propose one or more ways of ameliorating or solving the problem. Each team will (a) create a PowerPoint project and (b) orally present it to the class for discussion.

REQUIRED READINGS

Textbook

Online Weekly Interdisciplinary Readings
These focus on case studies from around the world.

Global Learning Common Reading
COURSE PREREQUISITES
None.

GRADING

Note: Each student must turn in a signed course contract to the instructor or teaching assistant before the add/drop deadline or will be dropped from the course. Each student must participate in the team project to be eligible to earn a passing grade in the course.

- **Final grade: percentage of 1500 possible points earned**

Final grades will be computed by percentage of 1500 possible semester points earned: 1350-1500 points (90+%)=A; 1200-1349 points (80-89%)=B; 1050-1199 points (70-79%)=C; 900-1049 points (60-69%)=D; less than 900 points (59% or less)=F.

- **Six multiple-choice exams & final grade: 100 possible points each, 600 possible semester points**

The exams will be based on Eitzen and Baca Zinn, *Social Problems*. Each exam will consist of 20 multiple-choice questions, will cover the specified textbook chapters, and will be worth up to 100 points.

Exam 1: Chapters 1 & 2  
Exam 2: Chapters 3 & 4  
Exam 3: Chapters 5 & 6  
Exam 4: Chapters 7 & 8  
Exam 5: Chapters 9, 10, & 11  
Exam 6: Chapters 12, 14, & 19

Make-up exams will be permitted only if the instructor is notified beforehand and agrees to give a make-up exam, or otherwise only if acceptable documentation is provided. All make-up exams will be given during the final week of the semester.

- **Attendance/punctuality: 100 possible semester points**

Attendance will be taken via clicker at the start of each class. Late arrivals or absences will be excused only if acceptable documentation is provided. Grading scale: 100=no absences; 90=1 absence; 80=2 absences; 70=3 absences; 60=4 absences; 50=5 absences; 40=6 absences; 30=7 absences; 20=8 absences; 10=9 absences; 0=10+ absences.

In the interests of courtesy to fellow students and to the instructor and teaching assistant, any student who leaves before the end of a class session without an acceptable excuse will be marked absent.
• **Weekly in-class quizzes: 200 possible semester points**

The purpose of the weekly in-class quizzes is to ensure that students have thoughtfully read the assigned material before each week’s class sessions. Each quiz will consist of five multiple-choice questions that address broad conceptual issues. Quizzes will be administered via clicker.

Missed quizzes can be made up only if the instructor is notified beforehand and agrees to give a make-up quiz, or otherwise only if acceptable documentation is provided. All make-up quizzes will be given during the final week of the semester.

• **Active learning component - 10 discussion forum posts: 30 possible points each, 300 possible semester points**

As an active learning component, students are required to post to the discussion forum in response to the instructor’s discussion questions, which are based on the course’s web readings. Each post must be no less than approximately 250 words and will be graded according to the following rubrics:

- Posted before the specified deadline (1 point) and with length of no less than approximately 250 words (4 points).
- Spelling, grammar: the posting must meet university-level standards of spelling and grammar (0-5 points).
- Clarity, coherence: the ideas are stated clearly and coherently (0-5 points).
- Relevance to assigned material: the posted ideas indicate that the student has read the assigned material (0-5 points).
- Critical thinking: there is evidence that the student has adequately analyzed, synthesized, and evaluated the assigned material (0-5 points).
- Poses a pertinent and useful question for discussion: the posting articulates a question for discussion that pertains to the assigned material and reflects critical thinking (0-5 points).

*Late discussion posts will not be accepted.* One discussion post will address the Global Learning common reading.

• **Co-curricular active-learning component – team project (PowerPoint project and its oral presentation): 300 total possible total points**

The team projects, as described above, will be graded according to the following rubrics:

- Relevance to the course material (0-60 points).
- Clarity, coherence: the ideas are stated clearly and coherently (0-60 points).
- Critical thinking: there is evidence that the team has adequately analyzed, synthesized, and evaluated the assigned material (0-60 points).
- Collaboration: all team members are integral contributors to the presentation (0-60 points).
- Punctuality: presented as scheduled (0-60 points).

Each student must participate in the team project in order to be eligible to earn a passing grade in the course.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 (Discussion post #1)
- Introduction and Chapter 1, “Sociological Approach to Social Problems”
  Sex workers of the world:
  www.allwomencount.net/EWC%20Sex%20Workers/SexWorkIndex.htm
  Immigrants & jobs:
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3520404.stm

Week 2 (Discussion post #2)
- Chapter 2, “Wealth and Power: The Bias of the System”
  Global wealth, global poverty:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/material.html
  Bias at home - the tragedy of New Orleans:
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4210674.stm
  Roots of “terrorism”:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/terrorism/
  http://www.perceptions.couk.com/why.html

Week 3 (Exam #1)
- Chapter 3, “World Population and Global Inequality”
  Global hunger:
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2449527.stm
  Global disease:

Week 4 (Discussion post #3)
- Chapter 4, “Threats to the Environment”
  Society’s damage:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/earth.html
  http://www.pbs.org/journeytoplanetearth/hope/uzbekistan.html
  http://www.pbs.org/journeytoplanetearth/hope/mexicocity.html
  Global learning common reading:
www.nytimes.com/2006/01/.../01cosmopolitan.html

Week 5 (Exam #2)

- Chapter 5, “Demographic Changes in the United States: The Browning and Graying of Society”
  
  A view from down under:
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/asia/1613538.stm

  Playing the numbers:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/numbers.html
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/trends.html

  It’s hard to be young:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/voic-oudu.html

  It’s hard to be old:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/voic-hewi.html

Week 6 (Discussion post #4)

- Chapter 6, “Problems of Place: Urban, Suburban, and Rural”

  Urban planet:
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/world/06/dharavi_slum/html/dharavi_slum_intro.stm
  http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2006/urbanisation/default.stm

  Making neighborhoods better:
  http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/whatis/what-is.html

  Gated communities:
  http://www.asu.edu/caed/proceedings97/blakely.html

Week 7 (Exam #3; discussion post #5)

- Chapter 7, “Poverty”

  The Millenium Campaign:
  http://www.millenniumcampaign.org/site/pp.asp?c=grKVL2NLE&b=138312

  Suburbs revisited:
  http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040920/dreier

Week 8 (Discussion post #6)

- Chapter 8, “Racial and Ethnic Inequality”
A Miami point of view:

Euro-Muslim perspectives:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4462840.stm
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/europe/2005/muslims_in_europe/default.stm

Week 9 (Exam #4)

- Chapter 9, ”Gender Inequality”
  
  What the biological sciences say:

  Subversive rock:

  Measuring the global gender gap:
  http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gender_gap.pdf (see page 8)

  Gender & color
  http://www.coloredgirls.org/media/audio.htm (program on “Marriage Promotion for the Poor”)

Week 10 (Discussion post #7)

- Chapter 10, ”Sexual Orientation”
  
  Your sex ID:
  http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/sex/add_user.shtml

  Political assault:
  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/

  A human right:
  www.amnestyusa.org/outfront/index.do

Week 11 (Discussion post #8)

- Chapter 11, “Disability and Ableism”
  
  Not so obvious:
  http://www.websitetoolbox.com/tool/post/bgrh/vpost?id=185136
  http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/
  www.grasp.org/

Week 12 (Exam #5)

- Chapter 12, “Crime and Justice”
  
  A Salvadoran story:
Week 13

- Chapter 14, “Work”
  
  That sweaty t-shirt:  

Week 14 (Discussion post #9)

- Chapter 14, “Work” (continued)
  
  Global sweatshops—t-shirts and more:  
  http://www.laborrights.org/creating-a-sweatfree-world/sweatshops/resources/12211  
  http://dissidentvoice.org/2010/02/global-sweatshop-wage-slavery/  
  http://www.globallabour.info/en/

  Nickeled and dimed:  

  Making a living wage in LA:  

  Living Wage Action Coalition:  
  http://www.livingwageaction.org/

  Living wage in Miami:  
  http://www.risepfiu.org/reports/A_Difference_that_Matters.pdf#search=%22living%20wage%2C%20miami%22  
  http://www.miamidade.gov/dbd/library/Living_Wage_Brochure.pdf#search=%22living%20wage%2C%20miami%22

Week 15 (Discussion post #10)

- Chapter 19, “Progressive Plan to Solve Society’s Social Problems”
  
  A Noble prize-winner’s approach:  

Final Week of the Semester (Exam #6)